

**POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND REFORM
IN CARTAGENA PROVINCE,
1700-1740**

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Founded in 1533 by Pedro de Heredia, Cartagena de Indias became within two decades the focus of imperial activities on the Spanish Main, quickly surpassing in importance its older neighbor, Santa Marta, to the east. Once established, the status of Cartagena as the "most esteemed Spanish settlement" in northern South America persisted throughout the colonial era. From the mid-sixteenth century on, the Spanish crown, acting on the "advantageous situation [and] the extent and security" of Cartagena Bay, centered regional commercial, military, and governmental networks at the port.¹ After 1550, Cartagena was the principal entrepôt for goods--whether borne on galleons or lone merchantmen (registros)--destined for the interior markets of the New Kingdom of Granada.² By the same token, Cartagena was the primary outlet for New Granadan exports, notably gold and emeralds. Moreover, because Spanish fleets stopped at Cartagena there before and after the Portobelo fairs (which functioned between 1598 and 1737), the city also served as a link in the Crown's communication with the silver miners and administrators of Peru.

As New Granada's commercial hub, Cartagena became its strategic nucleus as well. In the words of Governor Pedro José Fidalgo (1737-1739), "the security of the goods and monies of the merchant community [depended] upon the defense of Cartagena."³ This sentiment, however, hardly needed political pronouncement, for the city's walls and forts had long shouted it. The Spanish monarchy, recognizing the port's strategic suitability and opting for an urban Caribbean defense plan, fortified the city and its environs with some of the best military architecture of the day. Eight-foot-thick walls, for example, encircled the city; three forts protected the harbor; and on the eastern side of the port the massive fortress of San Felipe de Barajas stood guard over its inhabitants and businesses.⁴

Foreigners too recognized the strategic importance of Cartagena, as evidenced by their early and continuing interest in the city. For example, French pirates sacked Cartagena for the first time in 1544, just eleven years after the city was established. The most famous (or infamous) Elizabethan seadogs,

John Hawkins and Francis Drake, attacked the port in 1568 and 1586, respectively, with Drake and his men absconding with merchandise and currency worth 500,000 pesos. In 1697, a combined French force of pirates and sailors again captured the city, this time under the leadership of the famed Baron de Pointis and Jean Bautista Ducasse. Forty years later, Admiral Edward Vernon added to the mythic lore of Cartagena when he besieged the port with 23,000 men and nearly 200 ships. Thus, in own their way Spain's rivals also testified to the imperial importance of Cartagena.

Foreign assaults like these were, in the short term, devastating. But in the long term they testified more to the urban resilience than they demonstrated the port's military vulnerability. Instead, internal political corruption undermined Cartagena's public strength. Collaborating with foreign merchants and contrabandists, venal officials breached the imperial bulwarks of Cartagena more effectively and more permanently than invaders ever did. Thus, in the early eighteenth century, the imposing outward signs of power--walls, forts, and cannon--were just as much signs of mere political pretense. Dishonest leaders deliberately sabotaged Spanish defenses and mercantilist commercial policies. So successful, in fact, were they that by the time of the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748) the smuggling industry in Cartagena province produced an estimated 2,000,000 pesos in annual gross receipts, an amount ten times greater than contemporary yearly treasury receipts.⁵ This figure illustrates that, while illegal trade occurred throughout Spanish America, smuggling especially characterized commerce through Cartagena. Thus, as emphasized by no less than José Patiño, the crown official largely responsible for rebuilding the Spanish navy in the early eighteenth century, contraband traffic also marked the commercial and strategic importance of the port.⁶

This essay specifically looks at the collusion between royal appointees and smugglers, which was a fundamental aspect of political life in Cartagena in the early Bourbon period. Connivance at contraband trafficking, for example, illustrates the depth of the local political tradition of corruption. It also raises questions about the rationale and feasibility of Philip V's reformist policies. Similarly, because the

intertwined activities of smuggling and corruption represent a flouting of the law, monarchical authority, and the strategic posture of the port, they highlight the dialectical nature of early eighteenth-century Spanish imperialism in New Granada and indicate, at least in part, the health of the body politic in Cartagena.

To be fair to Cartagena elites, public corruption in Cartagena occurred within the context of Spanish commercial deficiencies. Smugglers established for themselves a permanent niche in the economy of Cartagena province in part because Spanish commerce simply failed the colonists of the region. After 1712, for example, only four galleon fleets visited Cartagena, and just thirty-six registry ships (licensed merchantmen), whose individual tonnage averaged only one to three hundred tons, sailed for the port between 1713 and 1763.⁷ Spanish vessels plying the Caribbean also arrived infrequently, about once every two or three months. Consequently, inter-colonial trade through Cartagena was, in the words of Juan and Ulloa, "not worth notice."⁸ As a result, Cartagena residents faced the price inflation of basic commodities. Between 1718 and 1742, for example, the price of even poor quality wine quadrupled in Cartagena, rising from 3.5 pesos per bottle to 14 (equally a price increase of slightly more than 1 per cent per month).⁹

The contents of captured contraband cargos also attest to the importance of illicit trade. Clothing and textiles topped the list of contraband commodities traded along the coastline of Cartagena province. If a Spanish man or woman wanted to dress fashionably, whether in the more common brittany linen or the more smashing "camlets and other stuffs of crimson and scarlet," he or she was all but required to deal on the black market.¹⁰ Moreover, illicit clothing still cost 25 to 30 percent less than its legally imported counterpart, despite the smugglers' near monopoly on haute couture and the costliness of risk.¹¹ Food also ranked high on the list of illegal imports. Wheat flour, sugar, salt, honey, and conserves all were commonly found among contraband cargos in the first half of the eighteenth century.

In terms such as these, smugglers were hardly interlopers; they were, instead, essential suppliers. Illicit trade was also just informal trade. In the words of one guardamayor of the port, the illicit importation of goods into Cartagena and its environs became "so commonplace that it was virtually the original sin in those parts."¹² Or, as Governor Pedro Fidalgo more politely put it in 1737, "necessity obliged the residents of Cartagena to deal with smugglers."¹³ Fidalgo thus admitted the ironic dichotomy that characterized the early Bourbon economy of Cartagena. On one hand, as we have seen, he recognized both the importance and the vitality of legal trade through the port and correctly considered them as strategic imperial interests. On the other hand, he acknowledged that neither Spanish American commerce, although crucial to colonial success, nor bulwarks, no matter how impressive they were, did not live up to their projected fanfare in the real world of consumerism. Thus, illicit trade supported the commercial vitality of the city and so sustained the port's *entrepôt* status as much as, if not more than, any galleon fleet.

Whatever the significance of meager legal trade through the Cartagena colony, it nonetheless ranked behind official complicity in the list of factors that contributed to the liveliness of illegal trafficking through Cartagena. All sectors of the Cartagena populace--rulers, bureaucrats, soldiers and sailors, clerics, merchants, even slaves--participated in illicit trade in the early eighteenth century. But, without a doubt, the most important of these groups was the ruling clique that equally dominated government, commerce, and high society in Cartagena. As one high-ranking law enforcement official put it, "Although the crime is seen, the proof is never found because criminals always leave sanctified, if not with the help of God, then probably with that of the judges."¹⁴ Public officials were especially important in the facilitation of contraband trafficking between 1700 and 1740 when smugglers had to compete with the galleon trade (albeit inconsistent) and lacked the cover of wartime commercial disruption.

Field Marshall José de Zúñiga, the governor of Cartagena province from 1706 to 1713, set the eighteenth-century pattern of public corruption and official complicity in foreign smuggling through the

port. Zúñiga personally oversaw illicit trafficking at Barú, the peninsula that formed the southern side of the Bocachica entrance to Cartagena Bay. Once he even ordered Cartagena artillerymen to cover an English smuggler being pursued by two French corsairs. Exhibiting the generalized corruption of his administration, his subordinates followed his lead. For example, Bartolomé Tienda de Cuervo, the accountant of the Cartagena treasury, himself supervised the importation of contraband flour just outside the city walls, and Sergeant Major Lázaro de Herrera y Leyva, stole gunpowder from the royal magazine and had it sold in Portobelo, the site of the great isthmian fairs. The governor's impudence, however, culminated at the end of his tenure. During the end-of-term review of his administration (residencia) he actually jailed his political opponents so as to permit more easily a fleet of twenty-one French smuggling vessels to anchor in Cartagena harbor!¹⁵

The need for reform and an immediate reassertion of the rule of law was abundantly evident to metropolitan policymakers. Aiming both to improve and to bolster Spanish rule in the region, Philip V encompassed the jurisdictions of northern South America in 1719 in the new viceroyalty of New Granada. This bold experiment sought to address the strategic and political needs of empire. It also purposed to slow, if not eliminate, the "cancer" of smuggling along the New Granada coast and to root out high level political corruption in Cartagena. To introduce and organize the machinery of viceregal government--that is, the institutional means by which to effect political reform--in Cartagena the Crown chose Antonio de la Pedrosa y Guerrero, a former attorney for the Audiencia of Santa Fe and currently a Councillor of the Indies.

For the sake of imperial authority and legitimacy in the colony, Pedrosa's arrival in the port came none too soon. When he disembarked in September 1717 he found urban finances in near total disarray and municipal government riddled with corruption. The volume of illegal trade in the city was reportedly so great, in fact, that the port suffered a shortage of legal currency, leaving unminted bullion and counterfeit money as the principal tender.¹⁶

Pedrosa's immediate investigations revealed that, as in the previous decade, provincial and municipal authorities bore much of the responsibility for the dismal state of political and economic affairs. Pedrosa uncovered a conspiracy among Governor Gerónimo de Badillo (1713-1716 and 1717-1719), Treasurer Faustino Fajardo, Accountant Tienda de Cuervo, Comptroller José Ruiz de Zenzano, Guardamayor Francisco de Córdoba, Registry Clerk Ignacio Sánchez de Mora and importers to register only one-third of incoming cargos for tax purposes. In return for this "oversight" the government officials received kickbacks equal to the actual tax paid by the merchants, that is, one-third of the amount that should have been paid. That arrangement of two payments nonetheless suited the merchants because they still pocketed a 33 percent tax savings.¹⁷

Pedrosa also discovered that Badillo and the treasury officials colluded in the deliberate undervaluation of captured contraband merchandise. Had they not been so obvious with their corruption and greed, Pedrosa would have found it more difficult to pin these additional charges on them. But, being too self-assured, if not too cocky, Badillo and his confederates got sloppy in their handling of one of the richest seizures of the eighteenth century in northern New Granada. When the valuable French prize, El Gran San Ramón, was brought into port, the governor chose Juan Luis de Biquendi, an important local merchant, to appraise the cargo and ship. Biquendi assessed their total value at 42,000 pesos, more than 72,000 pesos below fair market value. He then rigged the bidding on the goods to ensure that no honest businessman upset the deal.¹⁸

Pedrosa reacted swiftly and, in the context of Spanish personnel policies, harshly to all of this. He fined all of the officials involved, including Governor Badillo. He dismissed two of the treasury officials--Tienda de Cuervo and Ruiz de Zenzano--and he suspended the third (Fajardo). Pedrosa also fired Córdoba and enjoined the merchant Biquendi from making any further valuations of contraband for the Cartagena government.¹⁹

Pedrosa's apparently decisive actions to eliminate corruption in the city proved quixotic at best, for, quite simply, they failed to reverse the tradition of smuggling complicity. Illicit trade was, in the 1710s, an established way of economic life that linked administrators, military officers, and merchants into a powerful, obdurate clique. Moreover, family ties reinforced the commercial bonds. For example, the father-in-law of Sergeant Major Herrera y Leyva--the Count of Santa Cruz de la Torre--was the mayor of Cartagena and the leading slave smuggler in the city. Powerful, wealthy, and secure in their network, the Cartagena "mafia," as one Colombian historian labelled the group,²⁰ went so far as to plot an armed rebellion against Pedrosa and take over the city's forts.²¹

Significantly, though, some of the blame for Pedrosa's failure rests with metropolitan authorities. Despite official pronouncements to the contrary, the reality of royal edicts displayed little official enthusiasm for qualitative change. Philip V's government, for example, reversed most of Pedrosa's punishments by returning the discredited officials to their posts or even promoting them. In 1719, Philip appointed the discredited Badillo as governor of Panamá. Three years later he also became president of the Audiencia of Panamá. In 1725, Tienda de Cuervo was once again the accountant of the Cartagena treasury. Six years later, he paradoxically found himself in charge of the formulation of policy to combat smuggling into New Granada. Then, after subsequent stints as a lobbyist for the merchants of Cádiz and, somewhat ironically, a principal royal advisor on the reestablishment of viceregal government in New Granada, he returned to the colony as a special assistant to the first viceroy, Sebastián de Eslava (1740-1749), of the reinstated vicerealty.²² Only one of Pedrosa's victims failed to reemerge. After Ruiz de Zenzano escaped from house arrest in August 1718, he took refuge in the monastery of Nuestra Señora de la Popa, located west of the city. There he died within the month.²³

Surely to the chagrin of Pedrosa, whose duties ended with the arrival of the first viceroy of New Granada, Jorge de Villalonga (1719-1723), political replacements, such as Governor Alberto Bertodano (1720-1724) and new military officers, such as José de Aguila, the chief guard of the port, continued the

illicit practices of their predecessors. In fact, the new corrupt regime grew even bolder in December 1720 when Viceroy Villalonga joined its ranks. As a result, "illicit imports and illegal trade occurred with more frequency and to greater excess and caused greater disorder in the New Kingdom of Granada and in Cartagena than in any other part of His Majesty's American dominions."²⁴ Amplified by the personal involvement of the viceroy himself, the prevalence of political corruption--as measured by the level of contraband trafficking in Cartagena--made a travesty of the viceregal experiment. The new government hardly fostered "serenity, calm, ennoblement, and peace" in the realm.²⁵

While in Cartagena for the next six months Villalonga supported illicit trafficking by official edict, intrigue, and extortion. In early 1721, for example, the viceroy prohibited the issuance of all licenses to transport merchandise through the city, alleging the need to protect the sale of fleet merchandise then in Cartagena warehouses. Just a few weeks earlier, however, he had called this very kind of restriction extremely "prejudicial to the commerce of the province" and a "prohibition against all reason."²⁶ Evidently, in the clash between sound public policy and personal material gain, the profit motive defeated political idealism. As it was, Villalonga deliberately stranded legal cargoes in the city in order to facilitate his shipments of foreign contraband.²⁷ The viceroy's order also solidified his control of Cartagena affairs. Because it closed legal trade through the port, tax revenues declined. Cartagena officials, thus, became more dependent on Villalonga's largesse and good will, and so they were encouraged to cooperate with him in his illicit activities.

The illegalities of Villalonga, his household, and his staff peaked in May 1721 when the viceregal entourage left Cartagena for Bogotá. The episode began innocently enough. On the 8th, four loads of outgoing baggage arrived at the Media Luna gate in the eastern wall of the suburb of Getsemaní where the captain of the guard, Alfonso de Guzmán, found all of the accompanying papers to be in order. The next morning, an additional fifty-four crates arrived at the gate, officially escorted by José de Aguila but without the necessary transit permits. Guzmán therefore refused them passage out of the city, as he

should have. Aguila, in turn, swore that the merchandise belonged to the viceroy's mayordomo, which supposedly legalized the larger shipment, and demanded passage out of the city. Aguila even summoned Matías de Santa Cruz Echeverría, the viceregal secretary, to verify ownership of the cargo. Remarkably resolute, Guzmán held firm; he continued to insist on the presentation of the proper exit papers.

After another round of heated argument, Aguila finally produced a shipping license issued by Governor Bertodano.²⁸ At this point, however, the confrontation between viceregal officials and lower-ranking law enforcement officers was only half over. After Aguila presented Guzmán with the certificate, Aguila demanded its return. Guzmán, though, was in no mood to give it back. Surely, he, like everyone else involved in the clash at Media Luna gate, knew, or surmised, that the fifty-four crates contained contraband. Therefore, both sides sought to retain the license. On one hand, Guzmán wanted it because the document would prove that he was not culpable in fraudulent trade through the city. On the other hand, Aguila wanted it because he could then destroy it and so implicate the guard in contraband trafficking. Ultimately and not surprisingly, a week later Governor Bertodano ordered Guzmán to release the permits to the viceregal party.²⁹

Significant in terms of the level of corruption as measured by smuggling activity, this shipment of fifty-four questionable loads represented only about one-sixth of Villalonga's illegal shipments in May 1721. Another fifty loads of contraband merchandise--mostly textiles and clothing--followed on the heels of the Media Luna shipment. About the same time, the viceroy imported two hundred similar crates of contraband merchandise through Tolú and Barú, both points south of the city of Cartagena. That month, Villalonga took delivery of more than three hundred containers of freight valued at more than 150,000 pesos, all for a group of only twelve people. But, while the viceroy's contraband travelled unimpeded toward Bogotá, his restriction on legal commercial shipments through Cartagena kept the cargos of galleons, the English asiento (contract slave trade) ship, and several French prizes locked up in Cartagena warehouses.³⁰

Ironically, too, the day before Villalonga left for the viceregal capital he decreed the death penalty for anyone caught with illegal merchandise in Cartagena.³¹ Additional contemporary evidence of official corruption infers that Villalonga intended this threat of corporal punishment to safeguard his and his co-conspirators' near trafficking monopoly in the viceroy's personal absence from the city. For example, Villalonga dismissed and jailed treasury officers Faustino Fajardo--himself a known smuggler, as we know from his dealings with Antonio de la Pedrosa--and Manuel de la Cuesta when they refused to falsify their account books as the viceroy ordered.³²

This temporarily eliminated two commercial rivals of Villalonga's ally, Governor Bertodano. He took advantage of the less crowded playing field, permitting a French merchantman to dock in Cartagena only eight days before the galleon fleet arrived on 5 August 1721. Even the governor's wife got involved now, shuttling bribes between smugglers and her husband.³³

Similarly, the mayor of Cartagena, Santa Cruz de la Torre, remained an active accomplice in the contraband trade through Cartagena, as evidenced by his mistreatment of Jose García de Luna, a low-ranking presidio officer. Whatever pressure (and it was intense) Alfonso de Guzmán felt at the Media Luna gate, it was not as great as that applied to García. Because García was an importunate gadfly who wrote too many reports to Madrid for his own good, the smuggling elite of Cartagena, led by the mayor, conspired to silence him. Santa Cruz de la Torre trumped up charges against the officer, denied him the benefit of a legal defense, and easily convicted him. García's punishment was the confiscation of all of his belongings and a six-year exile in Guiana.³⁴

García, however, was not the pure victim. Like virtually everyone else in Cartagena in the early eighteenth century, he too was implicated in the contraband trade, having faced criminal smuggling charges in 1708.³⁵ His illicit conduct was common to the Cartagena garrison. Many soldiers abetted their officers' trafficking, terrified of the repercussions should they abstain. Moreover, the regular and often prolonged lack of pay and rations (in 1720 they went for two months without daily rations), gave soldiers

little alternative but to smuggle on their own account or to provide protection for other contrabandists, if they were to make any kind of living.³⁶

The malfeasance of Villalonga and his Cartagena accomplices disturbed the Council of the Indies, as it should have. On 4 June 1721 and again on 11 February 1722 it forbade the viceroy and all other ministers in New Granada to impede the sale of legal merchandise by legitimate merchants.³⁷ Villalonga, however, refused the royal order. The Council's May 1722 response made clear that its collective patience and interest in political reform was at an end. The new decree ordered the viceroy's dismissal, arrest, and imprisonment, and the confiscation of his goods, money, and correspondence. The viceregal secretary, the governor of Cartagena, and the chief guard of the port were to suffer the same ignominy.³⁸ The following June, the king and his advisors decided to eliminate the new viceroyalty altogether. Although the November 1723 declaration explained the decision in financial terms--maintenance of the viceroy's household was too expensive, for example--the reversal of the reform reflected dissatisfaction, if not disgust, with Villalonga's corrupt rule.³⁹

Significantly, however, Villalonga's sacking and metropolitan displeasure with the status quo in Cartagena did not translate into a discernable change of habit among the contrabandists of Cartagena. After less than a year in office, Governor Juan José de Andía y Rivero (1728-1730), asked Philip to relieve him of duty. He bitterly complained that he was impotent before the entrenched venality of the Cartagena ruling class and the power of the smuggling alliance between corrupt public employees, especially in the customs house, and local troops.⁴⁰

The events that followed in the 1730s seem to justify Andía's dismay. The corrupt tenure of Antonio de Salas (1731-1737) not only exemplified the Cartagena tradition of political corruption (indicating that the previous administration was an anomaly) but also brought disrepute upon the king's councilors. With Salas at the political helm, treasury officials, like Faustino Fajardo (again), were commonly bribed by smugglers. Like Villalonga before him, Salas deliberately restricted legal trade

through the port in order to facilitate his own illegal business. The governor even acquired royal power to pardon contrabandists at his own choosing.⁴¹

He did not completely neglect the enforcement of commercial laws, however. No public official could afford to disregard completely the laws of the kingdom. Thus, the Salas government did, from time to time, flex its muscle by arresting small-time contrabandists. For example, on 13 July 1731, Lieutenant José Paz stopped a carriage that he suspected of carrying contraband. The Lieutenant was right; illegal goods were on board. But he confiscated only twelve hats, ten pairs of underpants, and nine undershirts. Altogether the merchandise was worth no more than 22 pesos.⁴²

The public malfeasance of Salas and those under his direction led well respected Spanish officers in the Indies, such as Manuel López Pintado, the commander of the 1730 galleon fleet, to call for the governor's dismissal. Finally persuaded that yet another change in provincial administration was necessary, Philip V appointed a new governor, Pedro Fidalgo, for Cartagena. In the interim, however, Salas promoted contraband trafficking in Cartagena "with greater vigor" than ever before.⁴³

Not until the era of the reestablished viceroyalty of New Granada (1739-1810) and the concomitant heightened military presence in Cartagena de Indias under peninsular command did a marked improvement in the administration of justice appear in Cartagena. On balance, over the next three decades the salutary effects of viceregal rule that the reform of the late 1710s had promised actually began to appear. Significantly, without major innovations and without additional outlays of scarce cash, contraband seizures increased in number and value and treasury revenues increased. One obvious explanation for these improvements in the political economy of Cartagena is a decline in the level of political corruption in city affairs.

Whatever reputation for reform Philip V's government established before 1739, not to mention the viceregal innovation itself, was undermined by both the unabated contraband trade and the criminality of the officials selected to implement the plans for more efficient and more vigorous Spanish rule on the

Main. The constant corruption and regularized contraband trafficking through Cartagena in the first four decades of the eighteenth century do reflect badly on the reign of Philip V. The king's selection to head the first viceroyalty failed miserably; he was worse than incompetent. Yet, Philip turned to Villalonga in 1738 for advice on reestablishing the viceroyalty of New Granada. Despite his earlier history, Villalonga now supported the idea, claiming that it would accomplish three major imperial goals: prevent foreign smuggling into New Granada and so improve Spanish trade with the colony, bolster New Granadan defenses against possible English and Dutch invasions, and strengthen royal government in the colony.⁴⁴

To Philip's further discredit, Villalonga was not his only poor appointment who reemerged in some position of renewed authority. As mentioned earlier, Bartolomé Tienda de Cuervo, for example, also experienced a professional renaissance. Like the former viceroy, he rose from the disgrace of his dismissal on corruption charges to become a trusted advisor and policymaker. The continued metropolitan reliance on infamous officials for advice on New Granadan affairs, if not the original appointments themselves, demonstrate a failure of leadership and an almost resolute political ineptness. Political decision-making in Philip V's government certainly seems to support John Lynch's claim that Philip was a "Bourbon midget" who was "in some ways even less qualified to rule than Charles II" and generally "an impediment to good government."⁴⁵

Nonetheless, Philip reigned at a time that some of his solid, if unspectacular, advisors, like José Grimaldo and José Patiño, did attempt institutional reforms in order to improve the administration of justice in northern South America. Although their plans for a new viceroyalty were initially deterred by ensconced political corruption, they came back twenty-five years later based on the same plan of reorganization. The reform stuck the second time and produced some concrete results. Despite the handicaps of poor personnel decisions and personally flawed administrators, Philip V's government at least addressed the even greater problem of institutional weaknesses in the royal governance of New Granada.⁴⁶

The two interrelated political features of corruption and contraband demonstrate the ironic nature of Philip's rule. On one hand, royal appointments for New Granada reflected poor judgement and an acquiescence to, if not reward for corrupt behavior. Charles Gibson generalized in his classic survey, Spain in America, "[v]enality, graft, peculation, and personal use of public funds attended the operation of government at all levels" and that corruption was the "normal" state of political affairs in Spanish America.⁴⁷ The pattern of high-level official collusion with smugglers in northern New Granada in the early eighteenth century clearly substantiates that claim. On the other hand, imperial policy exhibited a commitment to strengthened royal authority, a willingness to try again, and an ability to react to changing geopolitical realities in the Caribbean.

An analysis of the connections between corruption and contraband also points toward a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of the political economy of Cartagena and, by extension, New Granada as a whole. Monies unaccounted for in the ledgers must be accounted for in the real world of eighteenth-century life. Commerce was both formal and informal. If contemporary estimates of the volume and value of Cartagena smuggling are essentially correct, which I believe they are, we generally have seen only half of Cartagena's commercial picture. Commercial (and interpretive) completeness is tied as well to the increasing realization of a Caribbean economy within the broader Atlantic economy following the collapse of piracy, c. 1680. Informal, but hardly underground, trade linked the Caribbean colonies of Spain, England, France, and the Netherlands into a single network of suppliers and markets. Through re-exports and smuggling, the merchant, military, and political communities based in Cartagena maintained direct and on-going contact with their English, French, and Dutch counterparts. The actions of Spanish colonial officials and their foreign partners belie the ideal of mercantilist monopoly that early modern monarchies embraced. They also heralded the continuing need for political reform in New Granada, illustrated the inadequacies of actual reform programs tested there, and demonstrated the problematic nature of adjusting to an evolving multi-national Caribbean economy.

ENDNOTES

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13. AGI, Santa Fe, 384, Fidalgo to the Crown, Cartagena, 8 May 1737.
14. AGI, Santa Fe, 374, Aguila to the Crown, Cartagena, 2 December 1721.

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